

S P E E C H

OF

Honorable J. W. PATTERSON,

OF NEW HAMPSHIRE,

ON

A CHANGE IN THE CONSULAR SYSTEM

ESTABLISHING CONSULAR PUPILS,

Delibered in the House of Representatives,  
First Session, Thirty-Eighth Congress,

*Wednesday, May 11, 1864.*

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WEDNESDAY, *May* 11, 1864.

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Mr. PATTERSON said—

Mr. SPEAKER: Having given some consideration to this bill from a desire for personal information, I am constrained, reluctantly, to withhold my assent to the recommendation of the committee that the House do not concur in the amendment of the Senate, restoring that section of an act of 1856 authorizing the appointment of twenty-five consular pupils.

The functions of our consuls are of the highest importance to our commercial prosperity, and often involve the peace of the country and the honor of the Government. The field of their duties lies beyond the limits of the nation they represent, and is far removed from the ordinary sources of information. Their operations are not confined to commercial affairs, but extend by treaty stipulations with several of the Barbary States and European Governments to the exercise of judicial powers. In Turkey, Siam, Japan, and China, they are called upon to determine the destination of immense treasures, and have the entire criminal jurisdiction of citizens of the United States. These, sir, are extensive powers, and infold the permanent welfare of the country. The proper discharge of such functions in a foreign land, and sometimes in collision with the able and wary officials of States jealous of republican institutions and of our growing power, demands the exercise of special gifts and peculiar accomplishments.

But, sir, I apprehend we do not ordinarily find these rare qualifications brought to the administration of our consular system as at present organized. Nor can we with reason require this until



it is brought into accordance with the European systems which educate men for these special duties.

Our consular system is embodied in the act of 1856, in which the scattered legislation upon the subject was gathered up, revised, supplemented, and framed into a single statute.

The origin of the system was a bill, generally believed to have been drawn by Chief Justice Ellsworth, at the time chairman of the Senate committee to whom the recommendation of President Washington upon the subject had been referred. The names of that committee have since become familiar and revered through all the land, and could they but speak to us of the early history of the Republic they might without arrogance or presumption adopt the language of the Latin poet,

“Quorum pars magna fui.”

The bill, with some amendments, passed both Houses unanimously, and became a law in 1792. More than seventy years have since elapsed, and the act, in substance, is still in force. In 1854 a distinguished member of this House pronounced the original system “cumbersome in its details and unsuited to the nature of American institutions.” I will not give judgment upon the justice or injustice of this criticism, but will presume to suggest that the fact that the original act still survives in its main features, though somewhat modified and supplemented to adapt it to the changed conditions and enlarged demands of our expanding commerce, testifies unmistakably to the profound sagacity, if not to the comprehensive wisdom, of its framers.

In 1803 an act was passed providing in various ways for the protection of American seamen, for the payment of fees, for the authentication of the transfer of United States stocks, and for penalties for the issue of false certificates and passports. The provisions of this act, in part at least, were made upon the recommendation of the elder Adams, in his second annual address to Congress. This, sir, was the sum total of our legislation for more than sixty years upon an interest involving more than any other not only the security of our citizens and the respectability of the Republic among foreign nations, but also the protection and enlargement of our commerce, the exhaustless source of national wealth, from which the Government draws its revenues in time of peace, and by which, once at least in our brief history, it has liquidated a debt whose ratio to the whole wealth of the country was nearly as large as that of the present debt to the present wealth of the country, and after that filled the Treasury with a surplus of \$40,000,000.

A report commending itself by its wisdom and ability to all well-informed men had been made upon this subject by Mr. Livingston, the Secretary of State, during the administration and

under the sanction of President Jackson. But, with the exception of the ill-judged act of 1840, regulating the shipment and discharge of seamen, and the duties of consuls, no essential changes were made in the system by our legislation till 1855.

In 1844, a bill to remodel the system was introduced into the Senate by Mr. Semple, of Illinois, and indefinitely postponed.

In 1845 a similar bill was referred to Mr. Buchanan, at the time Secretary of State, with a request for a report upon the same to the House. The Secretary's report, made at the commencement of the following session, was one of marked ability, and gave evidence of careful research and extended observation. It reviewed the whole subject, and recommended such improvements as would adapt the system to the then present amplitude of our commerce, and to the policy practiced by other nations in their commercial and diplomatic intercourse. No immediate action resulted from this report, but it furnished valuable materials for future legislation.

Mr. Perkins, of Louisiana, after a thorough investigation of the subject, prepared and presented to the House in 1854 a bill to remodel the entire diplomatic and consular system of the United States. The bill was a great improvement upon the existing laws. Among other things it provided that consuls and commercial agents should not be absent from their districts more than ten days without leave from the President, and that their salaries should cease if they were absent for a longer period either with or without leave; that none but citizens of the United States should receive such appointments, be employed as clerks, or have access to the archives of the foreign offices of the Government; that consuls in none of the principal ports should transact business in person or by an agent, and that they should receive their pay by salary and not by fees; that commissions and fees should be in part abolished and in part reduced, and the funds thus received returned to the Treasury and used to pay the consular salaries. The bill passed the House by a very large majority, and the Senate unanimously. It was approved, March 1, 1855.

Immediately on its passage Mr. Marcy set about the preparation of a volume of instructions, which was completed and transmitted to our consuls. The examination thus given to the subject by the Secretary and by the Attorney General in the preparation of this volume, led to the discovery of many defects in the law, and to an earnest recommendation of an early revision. The result was the act of 1856. In this bill first appeared a provision for the appointment of consular pupils, though it had been anticipated in a treaty negotiated with France by Mr. Everett. The act was passed and approved near the close of the session. At the opening of the next session an appropriation was asked to pay the salaries of the twenty-five pupils whom the law authorized the President to appoint. After a spirited and somewhat protracted debate, in



which there was a great deal of talk and a little sound reasoning, the appropriation was refused by the House. When the subject came before the Senate, the members of that body not only refused the appropriation, but voted to rescind the section authorizing the appointment of such pupils. Then, as now, the principal argument used by the opponents of the measure was the very obvious and unanswerable asseveration that the innate sagacity of an American citizen was an over-match for the learning, skill, and aptitude of any foreign merchant or official acquired through years of tedious training. Now, sir, I am not so foolhardy as to attempt the refutation of a self-evident truth, for "thank God I, too, am an American citizen," and will therefore devote myself to some objections in which we are not so well agreed.

It is urged in opposition that the law provides no guarantee that these young men will not be removed with every change of Administration; none that the Government will advance them to higher consular duties when educated, or that they will consent to serve in that capacity if desired so to do. The greater inducements held out by mercantile pursuits, it is affirmed, will inevitably draw them away from the service of the Government.

All these anticipated evils may be provided against, if it is thought wise, by specific provisions of law.

But, sir, the objections lose their force when it is remembered that these young men, unlike the students in our naval and military schools, would render a full equivalent, in service, for all they receive from Government during the process of their consular education; for they are to be assigned by the President "to such consulates and with such duties as he may think proper." It should be kept in mind, too, that the salaries of our consuls were graded by the law of 1856 upon the assumption that these pupil-clerks would be appointed and paid by Government. If, then, the House do not concur with the Senate in the restoration of this section, and do not make the requisite appropriations therefor, the salaries of our consuls, diminished by the compensation of indispensable clerks, will, as we are assured by the Secretary of State, be altogether inadequate for an economical support of themselves and their families in expensive foreign capitals.

It was while Mr. Hawthorne was serving at Liverpool that the act went into operation requiring all consular fees to be paid into the Treasury, and the consuls to be remunerated by a fixed salary. That eminent and gifted American was compelled to remove his family at once from the social and literary intercourse of the city, back amid the more simple enjoyments of the country, by a laudable desire, if not an inexorable necessity, to bring his expenses within his income.

The salary fixed at that time for both Liverpool and London was \$7,500. It has not since been advanced, though the unavoid-



able expenses of these consulates have greatly increased, as there is manifold and most mournful evidence in the correspondence of Messrs. Dudley and Morse at the State Department.

The consul at Glasgow reports that his present salary will not enable him to eke out an economical support for himself and family. The consul at Marseilles writes to the same effect, as follows :

"The consuls at Marseilles of all the principal Powers are paid some *double* and some *more than double* the salary of your consul ; yet all complain of the inadequacy of their pay, asserting that five francs five years ago had a value there that eight have not at the present time. Mr. Mack, the English consul, with a salary of \$5,000, informs me that his expenses for living during the last three years have outrun his income for that period to the amount of \$3,500, yet he lives in a plain style, and assures me that the only luxury he allows himself is a daily morning walk. I had intended to board myself and family, but with only my wife and two little children, I found that my plan, if carried out at a respectable house, would cost me much more than my entire salary, leaving less than nothing to pay for clothing, clerk-hire, &c. I remember that when I went to Iowa, an old gray-headed lawyer asked me if I was or had been a tailor. 'Ah, you have not,' he exclaimed ; 'can't succeed here then ; nobody but tailors make acceptable lawyers for Iowa people.' In another sense it is true here : to make his means fit the end, it requires a tailor for a United States consul at Marseilles."

Our consul at Paris, at the close of an exceedingly interesting and instructive communication, sums up the whole matter in the following statistics :

"The annual and indispensable expenses of the consulate, then, for the work I am now doing, may be briefly recapitulated as follows :

	<i>Per annum.</i>	<i>Per annum.</i>
Clerical expenses per month 1,144f.....	13,728f.	\$2,755 60
Fuel and lights for the year.....	250	50 00
Cleaning office, concierge fees, &c.....	150	30 00
Use of furniture, say.....	150	30 00
Relief of Americans, other charities, newspapers, carriage hire, religious services, hospitality, &c.....	.....	.....
	<u>14,278f.</u>	<u>\$2,865 60</u>

My income from the office may be more briefly stated :

Salary, less three per cent.....	\$4,850 00
Receipts for unofficial services, such as writing legal opinions, drawing an occasional will, taking testimony under commissions, attending invalids at their residence for the execution of papers, &c., all earned by extra professional labor, and amounting last year to the sum of.....	823 37
My share in revenues of three consular agencies for the year 1863.....	683 87
Total.....	<u>\$6,357 14</u>

Rating household expenses, as previously estimated, at.....	\$7,422 00
Office expenses.....	2,865 60
Total expenses.....	<u>\$10,287 60</u>
Deducting receipts .....	6,357 24
Leaves the sum of.....	<u>\$3,930 36</u>

"An office has need to be one of great dignity which can command such a premium for the privilege of holding it ; and then he ought to be very ambitious or very rich who would care to hold it long."

It should be borne in mind, sir, that this is from the pen of an able and accomplished gentleman, who has rendered valuable service to the Government during the pending struggle in other than official ways, especially in the publication of a work in French, setting forth the resources of our country and the character of our people in a way to secure for us the favorable judgment and good opinions of the European mind.

But, sir, I apprehend that these matters may all be left without solicitude to the operations of the laws of mind, which are more irresistible than the enactments of States. Men are insensibly drawn into those pursuits which harmonize with the habits and tastes which, if not created, have at least been matured and made permanent by education and association. These pupils, having become familiar with the languages of the respective countries to which they would be assigned, and affiliated thereto, in a measure, by ties of taste and friendship, and seeking to complete intellectual pursuits upon which they had entered, would be held to the consulates without law by a natural gravitation.

If, at length, drawn away by the tempting prizes held out to commercial enterprise in the majority of cases, their business operations would be confined to those countries with which both study and experience had rendered them familiar, for these would be to them the path of success. What then?

Knowledge would widen with the circles of trade and the intercourse of business, until these men, comprehending the higher relations and abstruse economy of commerce, and familiar with the institutions and habits of foreign society, would be fitted as no other American citizens could be to fulfil the responsible and often delicate duties devolved upon the consuls of this great commercial people. Nor would this be the entire outgrowth and fruitage of the system which the Government through three Administrations has attempted to establish. Many of the appointees passing to their professional training from our higher institutions of learning would not rest with the acquisition of foreign languages and a knowledge of what pertains immediately to official duties, but would pass on to a study of the literature, the history, the laws, and the genius of foreign Governments, and thus we should have in time what we never have had, a body of public men fitted, eminently fitted, by their comprehensive and varied attainments, to sustain the national reputation and welfare at foreign courts in the higher ministerial relations.

It will be perceived that I do not rest this argument upon any statute, nor even upon the regulations laid down by the State Department in respect to the duties and advancement of consular pupils. I base it upon an inevitable sequence of events that are in their nature related to each other. The advancement of these consular pupils to higher and more responsible duties and their



continuance in office will be a necessity growing out of their superior qualifications and the demands of both commerce and diplomacy for the very best ability which the genius of our institutions can produce. Thus it seems clear to my apprehension that the scheme, in accordance with its design and contrary to the fears of some gentlemen, will tend to obviate the instability which hitherto has been the great evil of our diplomatic and consular policy.

A still stronger argument for the restoration of the rescinded section of the law of 1856, if possible, is to be found in the increased and urgent demand for clerical service growing out of an act of the last Congress requiring triplicate invoices of all imports of foreign goods, certified to by the consul, vice consul, or commercial agent of the United States nearest to the place of shipment.

This act is precautionary against fraud, and specifies that one of the triplicate invoices shall be given to the shipmaster for the entry of his goods, wares, or merchandise, one forwarded to the collector of the port of entry, and the other carefully preserved among the archives of the consulate. This act has added \$100,000 to the receipts of the Treasury in consular fees, and, by a rough estimate made by those whose judgment upon this matter is entitled to great respect and confidence, has increased the annual revenues to the extent of \$10,000,000. But at the same time it has increased the business of the consulates sixty or a hundred-fold, and thereby made a necessity for an increase of the clerical force. As a consequence of this our consuls very generally, and, as it would seem, not unreasonably, have applied for an advance of salaries. These applications, with but three exceptions, have been held in abeyance in anticipation of the relief to be given to the principal stations by the clerical pupils provided for in this bill.

If now we reject this measure, we ought in simple justice to increase the salaries of our commercial agents of various grades to meet this unprecedented and unavoidable outlay, and that, sir, would be a burden heavier than it is proposed to lay upon the Treasury by this bill. Perhaps state-craft will justify such economy, but my limited observation has left me simple enough to suppose that a true statesmanship would scorn

“ With one hand to put  
A penny in the urn of poverty,  
And with the other take a shilling out.”

It is easy for this House to perceive that a single fraud, such as the operation of this law discovers to us to have been practiced upon our revenue officers heretofore, to the extent of millions of dollars annually, might deprive us of a sum sufficient and more than sufficient to cover the entire expense of this system of consular pupils. And in view of the unfortunate prejudices of the European mind against us, is it unreasonable to suppose that our commercial and governmental interests would suffer far less from



frauds perpetrated through collusion with consular clerks if they were intelligent Americans than if they were of foreign birth, intimate with foreign merchants, and educated into all the antipathies and antagonisms of European society?

The appointment of American clerks would seem to be dictated by common prudence, and from the consideration also that it would secure greater freedom and efficiency within the sphere of their activities. Vattel says :

“The functions of a consul require that he be not a subject of the State where he resides, as in this case he would be obliged in all things to conform to its orders, and not be at liberty to acquit himself of the duties of his office.”

This would apply in its full force to the chief clerk in the absence or sickness of the consul, and measurably to all the clerks in the discharge of their proper functions. We cannot afford to forego the advantages proffered to us in this bill.

But, sir, it is objected that the appointment of these twenty-five pupils will increase the patronage of the President, already fearfully large. There is an old proverb that it is the last straw which breaks the camel's back. Now, sir, all I have to say is, if *this* straw will break down the Government, or even demoralize an honest Chief Magistrate, neither the one nor the other will be worth saving. There are weighty reasons why these clerks should be appointed by and responsible to the Government and not to the consuls. Let me bring to the notice of the House the words of one of our ablest writers, at the time a consul at one of the principal marts of Europe. He says :

“In my opinion the whole staff of clerks should be appointed, not by the consul, but by the State Department, of which they should be the servants, and not removable by the consul except on grounds approved by the Secretary of State. With clerks of my own selection I would engage to commit defalcations to the extent of at least one-half of the receipts of the office without the possibility of proof against me. No man ought to be exposed to so great a temptation as this. Many men will certainly yield to it.”

It will be remembered by members familiar with our consular history that the successor of this distinguished gentleman, unfortunately for himself and the Government, proved the feasibility of the plan so ably forshadowed.

But it is still further urged, in language which has conveyed to my mind certainly something of bitterness and contempt, that the effect of this measure would be to establish schools in which the sons of political favorites would be educated abroad at public expense for the discharge of duties which they would never perform. One might suppose from the tone of this groundless charge, that it contained “a charm of powerful trouble” that must inevitably drag the bill into the limbo of perished legislation.

But I affirm that no candid mind can apprehend danger from this source when it is considered that the administration of Government frequently passes from one party to another, and that parties themselves are constantly changing. If it were true, it



would be the most innocent of all political patronage, and an evil likely soon to cure itself; for these young men, having never entered deeply into the struggles of politics, would, after a brief absence, cease to be partisans and become, what every commercial agent of the Government abroad should be, but what they are not very likely to be under the present system, candid and unbiased friends of the Republic.

I must confess, however, that what is here urged as the main reason to dissuade from this measure persuades me most to its support. Even if no immediate equivalent in service was to be returned, it would not, I apprehend, be a breach of any axiom of political economy or do violence to the teachings of a sound political philosophy, for this Congress to devote the small sum solicited by the Government through three Administrations, and by such statesmen as Everett, Marcy, Cass, and Seward, to an effort to improve the business capacity and professional intelligence of the commercial agents of this great people in foreign capitals. It might at least add to the stock of national intelligence, if it did nothing more, and thus feed the hidden sources of our prosperity, stability, and glory as a people. We do well always to bear in mind that ignorance is the mother of discord and sedition in free States, and makes popular suffrage a snare and a weakness. It has been our misfortune, and a main reason that we are now repeating the bloody experience of the early republics, that our population in a large section of the Union has increased more rapidly than the power to educate, enlighten, and assimilate the teeming millions. Had we to-day, sir, a bureau of national instruction under the guidance of an enlightened and judicious secretary it would be well for our permanent peace and prosperity, and would allay the anxious fears of many of the wisest and best friends of civil liberty both in Europe and America. That is a narrow and suicidal philosophy that would withhold or divert the bounty which the Government would devote to the education of its people. The measure before us is a part of that enlightened policy which appoints to special training chosen youth for special duties of pre-eminent and permanent importance to the Republic.

Permanent foreign clerks, familiar with the duties of the office, are frequently the leading personages, and have the paramount control of the large financial and commercial interests of our consulates. This is true not only in the temporary absence and disability of the consuls and in the transitions of Administrations, but too often during the entire period of an Administration. This is both disreputable and unsafe. Let us fill these clerkships with intelligent Americans, upon whose sympathies we can rely, who will labor for the welfare of our commerce and Government, and who, in time, will commend themselves to the appointing power, by their special acquisitions and qualifications, for interpreters,

vice-consuls, and consuls, and not unfrequently for still higher duties in the foreign missions.

But, sir, it is claimed that our commercial interests are as safe, and the honor and peace of the Government as secure in the unskilled hands of partisan appointees, as are those of Europe under the guidance of disciplined agents. And though entirely irrelevant on a question of consular service, the names of distinguished diplomatists have been drawn into this debate to bolster up a defective system. Do not gentlemen know that the distinguished men whose names have been paraded with such triumph were trained diplomats; that they enjoyed as a prerequisite of their great success the professional discipline which I advocate for our consuls? This is true of Jefferson, Adams, Everett, Wheaton, Motley, and others whom I might mention.

I am not unmindful of the great services and splendid abilities of Franklin, Jay, Wheaton, and other honored names never to be forgotten in our diplomatic history. Those venerated names but illustrate the rule and shadow forth the possibilities of a better system.

Of such, and of such only, could Horace say,

“Nil mortalibus arduum est,”

but the verse which succeeds in the splendid lyric,

“Cœlum ipsum petimus stultitia,”

though but a poet's myth drawn from the fables of the giants, is but simple verity if applied to our present American consular system.

Why, sir, Mr. Everett, to whom gentlemen refer, was the first to introduce this policy by embodying it in the treaty which he negotiated with the French minister in 1853. The Secretaries Marcy and Cass, who have been summoned before us, urged it earnestly and persistently. They who have had the best means of knowing the defects and necessities of our consular system, are the men who press this measure. The names to which the gentleman has referred are exceptions. That our commercial and revenue interests and the reputation of the nation have suffered sadly from the utter ignorance of our consuls of the languages, laws, history, and policy of the Governments to which they have been sent and of their own proper duties, is notorious. I do not say this to their disparagement. They may be intelligent in all other matters but not in this. It is their misfortune that they have been thrown from their proper sphere by the blind policy of parties. I call attention to the following communication from a very intelligent gentleman, formerly a member of this House, who has lately returned from his consulate at Matanzas.

WASHINGTON, April 18, 1864.

SIR: While my connection with a consulate has not been long enough to lend much value to my suggestions it was so recent that the recollections of my experience are vivid,



and may help to a correct appreciation of the difficulties surrounding that branch of executive service; and I beg to offer my observation to the Department.

I have recently read the debates in the Senate on the pending bill, a provision of which authorizes the appointment of consular pupils; and if anything can demonstrate the necessity of the measure it is the seeming failure of some of the ablest of that body to appreciate the subject.

To say that there are incurable evils inevitable to our system of government, and to accept the defects in our foreign service as one of them, is a weak escape from responsibility. Our commercial representation may be below that of any other respectable Government. Its defects are so obvious and the remedies so apparently possible that to say the service cannot be vastly improved is an assertion not to be accepted without persistent effort and experiment.

The consul is appointed with little reference to his actual fitness. He is the American average of ability and intelligence; has had no commercial or legal education; without any examination as to qualifications, he often goes out without the advantage of personal instructions under the Consular Bureau, and does not readily master the valuable Consular Manuel furnished him. As but one other nation speaks his language, he doubtless goes among a people with whom he can hold no possible communication. He knows nothing of their customs, mode of thought, or channels of information; knows nothing of their commercial ordinances and policy, or of the treaties of his own or their Government; cannot communicate with their authorities so as to procure a local recognition, pending the arrival of his exequatur. An instance occurred in Cuba where an American consul remained four months before he established relations with the Government.

The newly arrived American consul stands in the presence of a foreign people deaf and dumb, and is obliged to acquire many of the rudiments of human intercourse anew. With no familiarity with the common routine of his office or of commercial affairs, he receives his post from a predecessor who is in too much of a hurry or too churlish to instruct him, and many men in middle life are incapable of ever being instructed. His compensation usually precludes the possibility of employing a clerk. He is for the first time to see a ship's register, and the shipping articles are a new and occult revelation. At first the difference between an invoice and a ship's manifest is not apparent, and an extended protest is an extensive arrangement. He does not know the use of the numerous blanks with which his office is filled, and never finds them all out. The mode of keeping the consular accounts he does not apprehend, and not one in fifty of the newly appointed consuls can by possibility make up the necessary quarterly reports or furnish the commercial statistics that swell the annual volume of our Commercial Relations; and whoever examines those will be astonished at the many blanks which the incompetency of American consuls at important ports makes in those fragmentary and imperfect works. The captain of a port sends him a clearance for his visa, yet what it is, or from whence, or for what purpose, he has no conception; and when in his pursuit of knowledge under difficulties he finds one who can make its contents known he then has to be informed what he is to do to it, to the utter astonishment of the foreign officers who wonder most at his being sent among them at all.

Perplexing controversies constantly arise between seamen and their captains. The new consul knows nothing of either class, or in what way the disputes are or should be dealt with, and yet he must decide promptly. He does not know in what cases he may ask the aid of the local police, nor to whom or how he may apply.

Grave questions of commercial law are often met, arising from loss of cargo, wrecks, general average, &c., the authentication of records, taking proofs, &c., with a constant demand for drafting papers, for which he has no forms. So of the disposition of the remains and property of deceased Americans. So, too, he is ignorant of the delicate texture of our relations with the country where he resides, of subsisting treaties, of their construction, and whether questions arising under them were ever before settled, and how. Often the official correspondence of the State Department with his predecessor on questions that perplex him remain a sealed book to him; and he is ignorant of the ordinary precedents of the office he holds and the cases and traditions of his own consulate. A consular pupil of two years would be equal to most of these questions, or would have access to means of information which he would understand. An American consul was once imprisoned for one hundred days in Matanzas for attempting to exercise a consular right under a treaty with Spain. Though honest he was mistaken, and was left without redress.

If the new consul succeeds to one of the most important posts which employs subordinates, he necessarily and inevitably falls into their hands and under their control. He takes their impressions, adopts their views, sees what they desire him to see, and hears only their rendering of the things he would hear. A man thus commencing forever re-



mains the ward of his subordinates; and these may have been the employees of a predecessor removed for cause, and who sustain no relation of responsibility to the Government, as a consular pupil would.

In my own experience I received the constant and gratuitous assistance of one of the most accomplished of our consular officers in the Spanish dominions, and thus, I trust, the public service was not compromised in my person; and I was saved from the inevitable misfortunes and personal mortifications that would otherwise have attended me, and received thanks for services that were really due to another.

The constant education of twenty-five competent and emulous young Americans as consular pupils, not removable except for cause, and who should not succeed to consulates till after two years tuition, and who should be required to master commercial law, modern languages, or some of them, become familiar with our commercial treaties, &c., would soon supply a corps of competent consuls, and no administration could leave them unemployed.

Many would doubtless resign to seek places in foreign commercial houses. Their return to other pursuits would be avenues through which a rare fund of knowledge would find its way into public service in Congress and foreign missions.

I trust the motives with which this is offered to the head of the State Department may excuse its intrusion upon him.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

A. G. RIDDLE, *late Consul.*

Hon. WM. H. SEWARD, *Secretary of State.*

Such, sir, is the impotent condition of our consular system resulting from our policy of appointing civilians ignorant of commercial and international law and the special duties of the place to these high offices.

It may be said that these places of higher trusts and emoluments will continue to be bestowed as rewards for political services under any system. But give us a body of men eminently fitted for the work, and it will be found that there are interests of trade and of State stronger than the claims of party which will wrest these appointments from the category of party spoils.

The seventh section of the act of 1856, repealed in 1857, which it is now proposed to restore is a first movement in the proper direction. The importance of having well-informed Americans in the inferior grades of the consular service may well be illustrated by a reference to the illicit trade between Canada and the United States. That smuggling, to the extent of millions of dollars annually, is being carried on in silks and velvets and other goods from France and Switzerland, and teas from China, under the protection if not under the direction of our alien commercial agents in the British provinces is well understood by high officials who have the best means of information; and this is but an illustration, on a small scale, of the frauds practiced upon our revenues through the dishonesty of foreign clerks and the professional incompetency of consuls in other parts of the world. How long are we to endure such things for the mere gratification of what, by an expressive vulgarity, has been styled buncombe?

Again, it is urged, and it is the only argument against this measure which has weight upon my mind, that it is not prudent to add \$25,000 to the burdens of the Government in these perilous times. But, sir, I call to mind that the genius of trade, in periods



of great financial embarrassment, often fills the lap of poverty with plenty by judiciously investing capital in ways that will enlarge the profits of productive industry. So I can but believe this application of the public funds will increase the business and multiply the profits of commerce till the income it brings to the Treasury will far outrun the yearly draft. A Government, paralyzed through fear of evils to come, will inevitably be drawn into the vortex from which it shrinks. Let it be borne in mind that our State Department is nearly self-supporting; that our consular system, sustained at an annual expense of \$300,000, returns more than two hundred and fifty thousand dollars into the Treasury in consular fees, and that the incomes from this source are increasing year by year.

Give us back the Union reconstructed upon the basis of free labor and untrammelled enterprise, and our commerce will rise from the struggle like Antæus from his contact with the earth. With such an issue, though our commercial marine should be swept from the ocean, it would spring like a Phoenix from the ashes of war and renew its flight. Let us, then, conduct our legislation in the full assurance of final victory and prolonged prosperity. Sir, we will let

“No pent up Utica contract our powers,  
The whole boundless continent is ours.”

The classic gentleman who represents the commercial metropolis of the Republic upon this floor with such distinguished ability, a little time since quoted in eloquent phrase, but, as I must think, unfortunate connection, the proverbial *Delenda est Carthago* of the old Roman patriot. Sir, I commend to the gentleman to recall and ponder over the life and death of that great exemplar of civil liberty. Could we but unsphere the spirit of Cato and bid it speak through his lips, it would inspire them with no miserable word of discouragement or taunt or bitterness against his Government in this hour of the nation's prolonged struggle for life and liberty, but adapting itself to the changed condition of the times, would close all his speeches with the heroic cry, *Delenda est confederatio*..

Cato was more than willing that Africa should perish that liberty and the republic might survive.

In the law of 1856, the President is authorized to require of the consuls:

“The communication of information and the procurement and transmission of the products of the arts, sciences, manufactures, agriculture, and commerce from time to time, as he may think conducive to the public interests.”

They are liable also, in the absence of the proper officers, to be called upon to fulfil diplomatic functions. We see, therefore, that the discharge of very responsible duties, and those requiring extended information and a high order of intelligence, may be laid upon these officers. Their duties are represented by the Secretary

of State as having been very onerous and valuable during the progress of the present war. He says:

"Since the commencement of this war the Department has had much confidential correspondence with our consuls abroad in relation to the rebel privateers, the fitting out of the blockade runners, and equipping of vessels-of-war in foreign countries by individuals in the interest of the rebels, and the shipment of arms and other munitions for their use. Upon all these matters the Department has been kept fully informed by our consuls, and the information thus communicated, which has been promptly made known to the Navy Department, and thus to the commanders of the blockading squadrons, has led to the capture and condemnation of many blockade runners with valuable cargoes.

"It is important, therefore, that the chief clerk in each of the principal consulates should be a thoroughly loyal American citizen, fitted at any moment, in case of the sickness, absence, death, or temporary disability of the consul, to take his place and discharge faithfully his duties."

The object, sir, of our consular system is to protect the commercial rights and privileges of the nation, and to advance its prosperity and power. These highest duties of trade and government are committed to our consuls. No agents of the Government stand nearer the sources of national greatness, none are intrusted with higher interests. The peace of the country and the honor of its flag over every sea and in every clime are in their keeping. They stand in eminent social relations in all the great mercantile marts of the world, and by their attainments, manners, and business capacity, determine largely the opinions of mankind in respect to our national character. In view of these grave responsibilities, I submit, sir, that it is the part of a prudent policy and an enlightened statesmanship for this assembly to forego no opportunity to enlarge the influence of its representatives abroad, and to secure the respect of foreign nations.